DISCRIMINATION IN THE EDMONTON TAXI INDUSTRY

by

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"The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

Constitution Act, 1982, Section 1

"No employer or person acting on behalf of an emplyer shall

(a) refuse to employ or refuse to continue to employ any person or

(b) discriminate against any person with regard to employment or any term or condition of employment,

because of the race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, physical disability, marital status, age, ancestory or place of origin of that person or of any other person."

Individual's Rights Protection Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta 1980, Chapter I - 2.

"The customer is always right."

A Taxi Company Manager

PREFACE

For many Edmontonians a ride in a cab will be one of the few occasions on which they find themselves doing business with someone who looks different, speaks with a different accent, or has a very different background from their own. The taxi industry presents an interesting test case in which to examine the tolerance our society extends to those who are identifiably different.

Our culture values freedom of choice. It also values freedom of opportunity. These values are in conflict within the taxi industry. Many in the taxi industry believe that customers do not want drivers from visible minorities. A company may act on this racist notion because it feels "the customer is always right". The taxi industry vigorously espouses our society's value of free enterprise, the right of individuals to freely enter into contracts, and the rights of consumers to spend as they see fit. The result is a paradox. Immigrant groups and visible minorities are involved in large numbers in the taxi industry. Most of them, and most others, believe that race or background should play no part in the business. Yet, their experience shows that it does. The current state of the balance between these competing values is the subject of this report.

The issue here is not whether the public should have a choice in the race or ethnicity of their cab drivers. The issue is, why should it matter? To have a preference at all is discriminatory, because it means reacting to an individual's skin colour, speech pattern, or some other factor which has nothing to do with that individual's ability to do the work. At the level of personal choice there may be many reasons for an individual calling one company over another, or picking one cab over another at a cab stand. However, when all these individual choices are viewed collectively and acted upon by individuals and companies, they can result is a systematic pattern of discrimination.

In this study we reviewed records, talked to managers, observed dispatchers and interviewed a representative sample of taxi drivers over a period of three months. We found there are, only rarely, incidences of blatant racism. Rather, the evidence suggested that beliefs of racism are likely to have the force of fact because they are widely held. This is compounded by confusion about appropriate types of behaviour. The cab industry and the commission to which it reports need to look to hiring policies which have created an environment of misunderstanding. Immigrant groups need to appraise their experiences in terms of the difficulties encountered by all cab drivers. Most of all, members of the public need to consider whether they foster the impression that they have discriminatory,racist preferences.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Many more cab drivers are immigrants or members of visible minorities than is the case for most occupations in Edmonton.

Cab drivers work long hours for low pay and this is the source of a great deal of job dissatisfaction. However, the income differences for drivers with different ethnic backgrounds is not great. Whatever discrimination there is against some groups does not translate into markedly lower incomes.

Drivers of different backgrounds have different aspirations. Many immigrant drivers have a worse job than the one they left in the countries of their birth. They are looking for better jobs and see themselves as getting better jobs in the future.

Almost all drivers feel that qualified drivers should be hired regardless of race or background. Yet, immigrant groups and visible minorities are not distributed equally between the cab companies. Drivers from visible minorities had more difficulty getting their cab driving jobs than did white drivers, but there is no evidence that any companies systematically discriminate by refusing to hire drivers from particular ethnic groups. Most drivers, from all backgrounds, feel there is discrimination in hiring. Cab driving is not an open labour market in which all companies are equally assessable to all drivers, nor is it a closed market where any group is systematically excluded from employment.

Drivers from all backgrounds report having problems with customers, most of which they explain as being caused by customers who are in a bad mood, drunk, or not able to pay. Foreign born drivers who are members of visible minorities explain more of their problems with customers in terms of racism than do European or Canadian born drivers.

Six out of ten drivers report having no problems with others in the cab business. Asian Indians are more likely to report problems with co-workers than are other groups. They are also more likely to explain these difficulties as being caused by racism.

The incidence of blatant discrimination in customer telephone requests for taxis is extremely low. The companies who took part in the study do not honour a customer request to send a 'white' driver. However, one third of the drivers believe that the customer has a right to request a white driver and one half believe there are companies that will send a white driver if one is requested. Three-quarters of the drivers believe that the riding public discriminates and they name Asian Indians as the group most often discriminated against. Over half the cab drivers, from all backgrounds, report that they have personally witnessed discrimination.

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PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted at the request of the Alberta Human Rights Commission to assess ethnic and racial discrimination associated with the taxi business in Edmonton. The particular events which gave rise to this concern involved complaints that dispatchers may have received and acted upon racially discriminatory requests from some customers.

Two issues are addressed in this study:

a) discrimination by taxi customers and within the industry, and

b) the perception of discrimination in the work experiences of taxi drivers.

Information was collected by: a) extensive field observation in which research staff monitored thousands of telephone calls to cab companies over randomly selected time periods; b) open and unstructured interviews with cab company personnel such as telephone operators, dispatchers and managers in which these individuals were invited to explain the taxi business from their point of view; and c) telephone interviews with a representative sample of approximately 10% of Edmonton's taxi drivers who were asked about their work histories, work experiences, and attitudes. The study places the perceptions of discrimination and the reported incidents in the context of the industry as a whole. This report focuses on the work experiences and opinions of drivers as found in the survey and supplemented by information gathered by direct observation and by interviews with company officials.

Those readers acquainted with the taxi industry will find much that is familiar to them and, hopefully, some that is new. It is for those readers not familiar with the business that the detail has been added. There are strongly held views on all sides of the issues and people with strongly held views are hard to please. This

report will not please them. If it gives them new things to think about and observations to debate it will have served its purpose.

THE CAB COMPANIES

Comments about cab companies will be general and brief. The terms of reference for this study specified that companies not be identified.

The cab business in Edmonton is dominated by two large companies of roughly the same size that have probably over 70% of the market between them. They each have several hundred cabs and drivers. Then there are three medium size companies of around 100 cabs each and three small companies of only a few cars each. At the smaller end of the market a number of companies have come and gone in recent years. Information about companies is incomplete as not all companies were willing or felt able to assist with this study, and in some cases, persons who could speak on behalf of the company proved difficult to contact. However, the overall level of co-operation from the industry was high and several companies and individuals went to great efforts to accommodate the researchers.

The larger companies have large staffs of non-drivers handling dispatch, telephone answering and administrative duties. All but the smaller cab companies are involved in related business operations, such as courier work and contract work for business clients. The larger companies also have the capability of competing in specialized markets, such as tendering for the exclusive rights to cab stands on private property. This tendency to specialize has an impact on the type of work available to a driver with that company and the situations that the driver will encounter doing the work. This is relevant to the discussion of discrimination as experienced by drivers, but will be dealt with only where it can be done without compromising the identity of the company.

It should be noted that several companies were very forthcoming with

confidential information about their business practices, customer volumes, and so on. This was invaluable in interpreting the results of the research but will be excluded from any discussion in the report in order to honour the confidence in which the information was given.

THE CAB DRIVERS

The sample group consisted of 135 drivers randomly selected from a list of individuals licensed to drive cabs. About 70% were driving at the time of the interviews. The others had been drivers in the recent past, but were unemployed or doing other work at the time of the study. Their experience in the taxi industry ranged from a few months to over 40 years, with the average driver having between 7 and 8 years experience. Women constituted only 7% of the sample, which corresponds to the 1986 Census in which 8.3% of the drivers in Canada were women (Statistics Canada. 1988. 1986 Census of Canada. Occupational Trends 1981-1986).

The study revealed a high degree of ethnic diversity among cab drivers. Fully half the drivers surveyed were born outside Canada, 42% were members of visible minorities, and an additional 22% might be identifiable on the basis of accent. They were born in Canada and 22 other countries, spoke 27 different languages between them and identified themselves as belonging to 40 different ethnic groups. While this may not be an exhaustive list of ethnic groups working in the taxi industry it serves to show the ethnic diversity present. The female drivers in the sample were all English speaking born in Canada.

By way of comparison, in Alberta 20% of the male population over 20 years of age were born outside Canada, while in Edmonton's cab industry, 54% of the men were born outside Canada. This means that an immigrant male is 2.7 times more likely to become a cab driver than is a "native born" Canadian. The likely explanation for this is that it is relatively easier to become a cab driver than to enter other occupations requiring special occupational credentials or language

skills. There is evidence that some people stay and prosper in the cab business, while many others might treat cab driving as a first job and move on in time.

For the purposes of this report the respondents to the survey were grouped into ethnic categories. Fortunately, the answers of the drivers were highly consistent in terms of country of birth, language first learned as a child, and ethnic identity. This allowed the construction of categories based on the way in which members of a group would differ from the majority, and the way in which they would be identifiable. The findings of the survey support the notion that members of these groups do, indeed, experience the world of cab driving differently. The data could have been grouped in a different fashion, for example into "born in Canada" and "not born in Canada, as "white" and "non-white", or simply by ethnic identification. These possibilities were explored and found to be less sensitive than the groupings presented here. The ethnic categories, illustrated in Figure 1, are as follows:

CANUCK - culturally Canadian English speakers. These individuals come from a variety of British and European roots. They represent 36% of the sample.

EUROPEAN - this group all learned a European language, other than English, as their first language, and virtually all of them were born in a European country. For the most part, they are older than other immigrants and represent the period of post-war immigration. Twenty-two percent of the sample fell in this category. They probably do not form a "visible" minority and likely share many cultural characteristics with "Canucks" but might be identifiable because of accent. It is likely that many of these individuals found ties of kinship or religion and culture with people of similar background already well established in the community.

NATIVE - this term is used to denote individuals who cited whole or part North American Indian background. These individuals usually learned English as a first language and were born in Canada. They were given a separate grouping because it is commonly accepted that this group is identified as distinct by most others in the society. They are members of a "visible minority" and have an identity separate from "Canuck". Only 10% of our sample was native. Because of this small number it is important to treat the results for these respondents with caution.

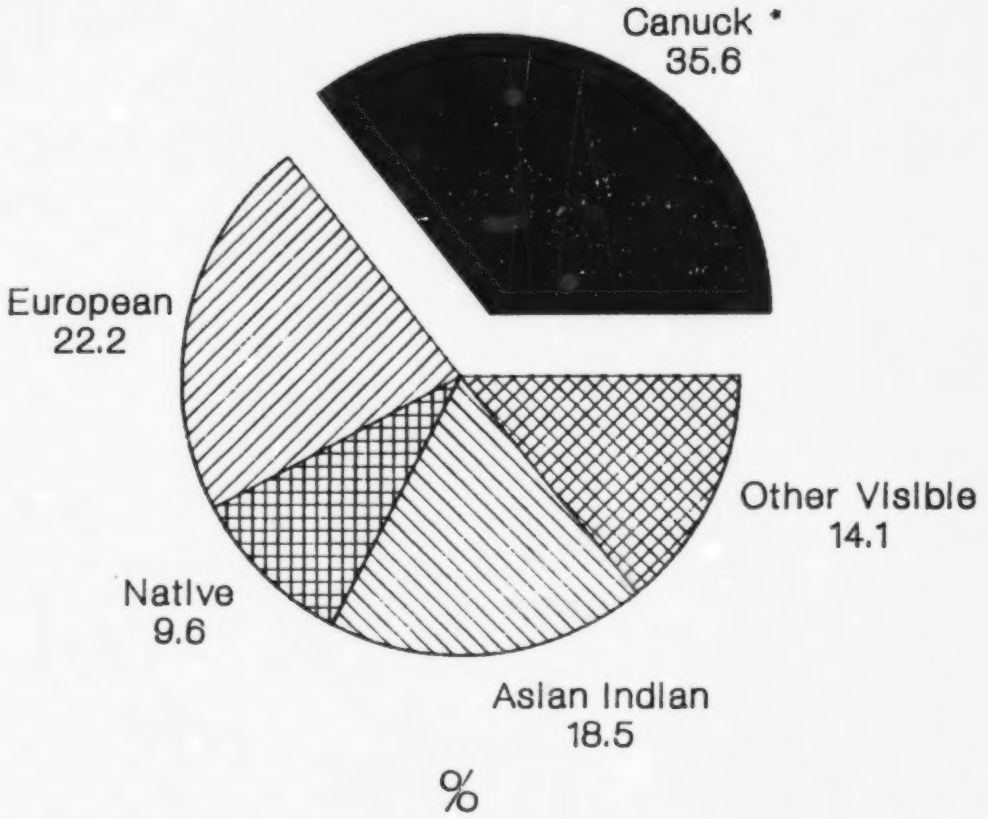
ASIAN INDIAN - this group is composed of immigrants from India or Pakistan and those born elsewhere into cultural/linguistic groups with these origins. They are a visible minority and also may be identifiable in terms of speech and dress. They constitute 19% of the total sample, with Sikhs constituting three quarters of the individuals in this group.

OTHER VISIBLE - is a category which contains individuals who would be visibly distinct from Canucks but who are not represented in the sample in large enough numbers to allow their responses to be identified separately. This group contains individuals from all over the globe: Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, South America, and so on. This is in no sense a homogeneous group and the responses cited for this category should not be interpreted as typical for any of the sub-groupings it contains. However, there is a thread of common experience for members of this group and it concerns language. Most members of this group arrived in Canada with less

previous exposure to English than might have been the case for Europeans or Asian Indians. Their experiences have been different and many of these differences could involve problems of communication. They make up 14% of the sample.

The typical Edmonton cab driver is a male 40 years of age, who has a high school education, is married with his spouse employed outside the home, and is living in a three person household in a house he owns. He is likely to own his own cab, to drive it about 60 hours per week and to report a yearly income, after expenses of about $10,000. Drivers from all backgrounds also report many common experiences in the difficulties they may face with some customers and the types of problems that arise at work. However, there are significant differences in the experiences and attitudes of drivers from the different ethnic backgrounds. These differences will be discussed throughout the body of the report along with the situations that help explain them.

Ethnic Background of Edmonton Cab Drivers



• Canuck refers to culturally Canadian English speakers

Figure 1

WHAT CABS DO

The taxi industry operates in a narrow market niche between comparatively cheap automobiles and heavily subsidized public transit. This results in an unusual market in that two types of customers predominate: those who take cabs for the convenience and for whom cost is not a factor, and those who take cabs because they have no choice. The top end of this market is business people, tourists and those who appreciate the convenience of not driving themselves. The bottom end of the market is people without cars who must still make medical appointments, appointments with government agencies, shop for groceries, and so on. There is no large middle class ridership for cabs, these people usually drive themselves. This creates a marketing problem for cab companies and drivers. The top end market is likely to produce good revenue and the low end to produce considerable volume. The appearance in recent years of limousine type services and cabs portraying a luxury image is an attempt to tap the top end market. It is widely thought in the industry that this clientele is very sensitive to clean cabs, to well dressed drivers, and possibly to the racial origins of the drivers. The problem remains that the type of service which might attract one segment of the ridership could well alienate the other. This market differentiation has resulted in increased specialization among the companies and for their drivers. It follows that a driver for one company might come into contact with a very different type of clientele than someone driving for a company competing for a different market segment.

Most people are likely to think of the cab company as a place you call when needing a ride, and a cab as something you will find as you need one outside the airport or the hotel, or passing along the street. These three sources of business - telephone/dispatch, cab stands, and "flags" - constitute the bulk of the cab business. Cab stands can be "open" to all companies, or "closed" such as those on private property which are tendered to a single cab company. Larger companies have the resources to allow them to specialize in closed stands and in sophisticated dispatch equipment. Smaller companies do comparatively less

telephone business and are dependent on flags and open stands. It follows from this that the company a driver works for will have a significant influence on the type of work done and, by implication, on the remuneration he will get for it.

Business clients are of importance to cab companies and the companies actively compete for corporate accounts. These accounts may involve the pick up and delivery of materials as well as people. Some companies use cabs in the same way others use courier services. For many businesses it is more efficient to use cabs to move people about than to provide their own fleet transport. For example, airline crews go back and forth to the airport by cab, letter carriers are delivered to their routes by cab, and government personnel are given cab vouchers. Contract business is probably a growing market (at least cab companies want it to grow) though it was not possible to estimate the proportion of trips that originate from business clients. It has a significant impact on the experiences of cab drivers because an individual who takes one cab rather than another at an "open rank" cab stand may be making a selection based on a contractual arrangement. Unfortunately, to the driver at the head of the cue such an action may be indistinguishable from discrimination.

At the other end of the market the cab industry has been able to provide services to poorer people beyond what might be considered usual business practices. This is not a formal arrangement, but several instances were noted where a driver took a watch or TV as collateral against payment of the fare at a later date. Some people in the industry also spoke of individual drivers reaching credit arrangements with particular clients who would pay when their welfare or UIC cheques came in. These types of arrangements appear to be widespread. Even if they do not constitute an important part of the market for cab companies, they certainly are an important resource to the poor.

The taxi industry provides important services to society as a whole and to many clients with special needs. During the course of observing incoming calls to

taxi companies the researchers noted a wide variety of requests for service that went beyond simply sending a cab to a home or business to pick someone up. The following examples will make the point:

- doctors' offices and medical labs use cabs to transport rush test samples

- people who are ill use cabs as an alternative to ambulances

- public sector agencies uses cabs to transport clients to appointments, to take institutionalized clients out on day trips and to "bus" children to schools

- a doughnut shop used a cab to deliver an emergency supply of icing sugar to a sister doughnut shop

- a dog breeder uses cabs to transport animals to stud

HOW CAB DRIVERS FEEL ABOUT THEIR WORK

By way of comparison, the 1989 Edmonton Area Study (Population Research Laboratory, University of Alberta) asked the following question of a representative sample of 443 Edmontonians: "Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job?" The response was that 74.6% were satisfied or very satisfied and this answer is typical of the responses Canadians give to this question the many times it has been asked. This study asked the same question of cab drivers and got quite different results. (Table 1)

Table 1 Job satisfaction of taxi drivers and other Edmonton workers

	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
	%	%	%
Taxi Drivers			
Canuck	56.3	18.8	25.0
European	63.3	16.7	20.0
Native	76.9	7.7	15.4
Asian Indian	40.0	12.0	48.0
Other Visible	15.8	31.6	52.6
Total	51.1	17.8	31.1
Edmonton sample (EAS 1989)	74.6	14.0	11.5

These results clearly illustrate one of the general problems associated with many of the discontents that arise in the taxi industry. Cab drivers are much less satisfied with their jobs than are most other Edmontonians. Interestingly, Natives are satisfied with their (taxi) jobs in about the same proportion as most Edmontonians, but every other group is markedly less satisfied, particularly Asian Indians and Other Visible minorities. Questions were also asked about satisfaction with income and satisfaction with the broker. Dissatisfaction with income was the most powerful explanation of job dissatisfaction with 57.9% of Other Visible minority dissatisfied followed by Asian Indian at 48%, European at 43.3%, Canuck at 41.1% and Native at 30.8%. Taxi drivers are much more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs than are workers in other industries. Visible

minorities, except Natives, are much more likely to be dissatisfied than other taxi drivers. This dissatisfaction can be looked at in terms of how it relates to take home income and to the hours that are worked to get that income.

Drivers were asked their income after expenses from cab driving for the past year. Eighty percent answered the question, which is a good response rate for a topic as sensitive as income. Many factors might influence the accuracy of these results: a few drivers drive only occasionally, some had language difficulties understanding "after expenses (but before deductions)", and it is always possible that some did not report accurately. These factors make it difficult to interpret dollar figures. Nevertheless, they afford a rough comparison to Edmonton as a whole, when considered against the results from the Edmonton Area Study, 1989 (Population Research Laboratory, University of Alberta).

Table 2 Average (mean) Household and Individual Income

	Household	Individual
Cab Drivers	**24,000-25,999**	**10,000-11,999**
Edmonton sample	**32,000-31,999**	**18,000-19,999**

Cab drivers report little more than one half the income reported by the average Edmonton worker and household incomes are about three quarters the average.

The other important factor in considering income is the hours worked to take home that income. Cab drivers work very long hours compared to most people and many of those hours will be unproductive time waiting for a customer. The average (mean) is 54 hours a week with Asian Indians and Canucks working an

average of 57 hours and Natives an average of 43 hours. There is not much difference between the catigories and considerable difference within the ethnic groups.

These elements are combined in Table 3 to show the difference in income of groups in comparison with income for all drivers (column 1) and the hours worked for that income (column 2), that is to say an hourly rate of pay, compared with the overall average. As dollar figures would be misleading, the results are given as a percentage of the overall average for all taxi drivers.

Table 3 Average income and hourly rate of groups as a percentage of all groups

	Relation to mean income	Relation to mean hourly rate
Canuck	**99.5**	**104.6**
European	**115.5**	**108.5**
Native	**74.5**	**79.0**
Asian Indian	**94.2**	**96.6**
Other Visible	**107.7**	**95.7**

By way of explanation, Europeans earn a little more in total (115.5% or 15.5% above average) and have a slightly higher average wage (108.5% or 8.5% above average). The variation between the groups is not statistically significant, which is to say the differences are small enough that they may have happened by chance. There was also great variation within the categories. The length of time an individual has been driving cab is also a factor. It is commonly accepted that it takes a year or two to learn the business. Native incomes appear much lower, which may be the case, but the number of natives in the sample would have had to be larger to know for certain.

Table 3 is important to any discussion of racism or prejudice within the taxi industry because it shows only small differences in income among ethnic categories. Visible minorities tend to earn a little less, but if customers do discriminate against certain groups, this is not strongly reflected in the reported incomes of those groups.

Cab driving can be compared with other occupations nation-wide by using data from the Canadian Census. A standard way that sociologists do this is by using the "Blishen Score" for occupations (Bernard R. Blishen, "The 1981 socioeconomic index for occupations in Canada", Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 24 1987:465-488.) Blishen scores measure the occupational prestige which people accord to different jobs and this is closely related to the income level and education level of individuals in an occupation. When this is calculated for all occupations it is possible to rank occupations in terms of their "socioeconomic status". Cab driving has a score of about 31 on this scale, while, to give other examples, dentists score 102 and bartenders score 29. Cab driving comes 435th of 514 occupations calculated.

On the whole, the job of cab driver is one of long hours for comparatively low reward and many more drivers are dissatisfied with their jobs than is typical of other occupations. Many drivers value the job for its freedom to chose working hours, and for the opportunity to be, for the most part, one's own boss; but this would not seem to make up for the perceived disadvantages. This is shown by answers to the question "Have you looked for another kind of job in the last year (other than a cab driving job?)". Overall, 39.8% of drivers have looked for other kinds of work and the differences between the ethnic categories were significant. Asian Indians and Other Visible minorities are more likely to have actively looked for other jobs (Figure 2).

Dissatisfaction with Cab Driving second jobs and looking for other work

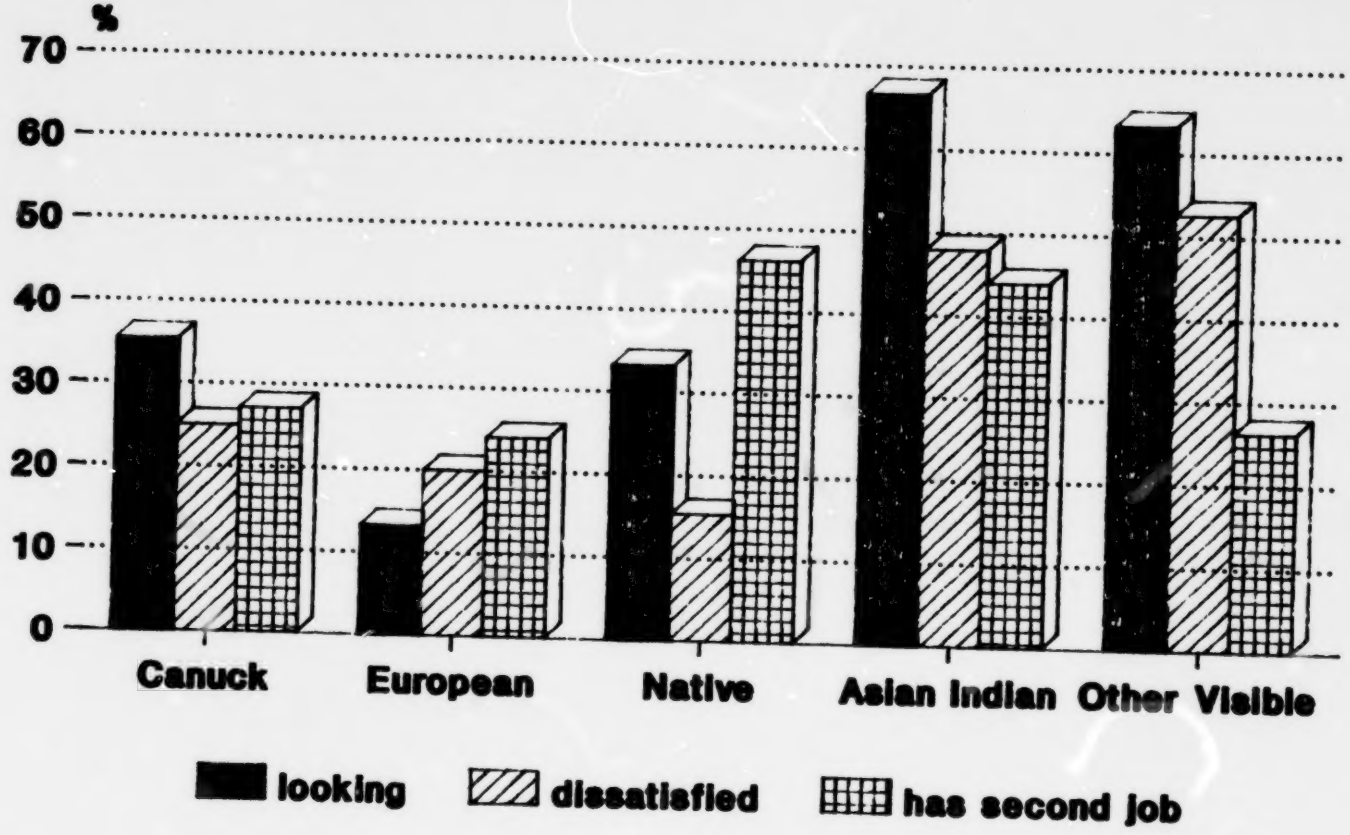


Figure 2

In fact, a lot of drivers are doing something else. Thirty-one percent have a second job other than cab driving. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the groups as it concerns job satisfaction, looking for other work and having a second job. Asian Indians and Other Visible minorities are very dissatisfied with cab driving, and along with Natives, are very likely to have a second job. On the other hand, Canucks and Europeans are not so likely to be looking for other work or to have second jobs.

Drivers where asked about the jobs they had before becoming cab drivers, the second jobs they had and the jobs they would like to have in 5 years. Fully three-quarters of the drivers had better jobs (jobs with higher status on the Blishen scale) before they became cab drivers. This may be explained by the immigrants who left higher status jobs in other countries. Of those that have second jobs, about two-thirds are jobs which would probably pay better than cab driving. About 6 out of 10 drivers see themselves in a higher status job five years from now, while the others said they did not know what they might be doing at that time. This is consistent with the pattern that emerged about attitudes towards work. Many immigrant drivers have a worse job than the one they left in their country of birth, they are looking for better jobs and see themselves as getting better jobs sometime in the near future. There is, in fact, a lot of job mobility in and out of cab driving, but it is also the case that many individuals seem to keep the job much longer than they imagine they will. Cab driving can be a world of unrealized dreams, hard work and low income.

This information raises an interesting question. Since drivers in all groups work roughly the same hours for about the same income, why do some groups show more discontent with the job? The following parts of this report will go on to consider other aspects of the job of cab driver which might account for the differences between our ethnic categories.

CAB DRIVERS ARE SOMETIME EMPLOYEES

To understand the different ways the ethnic categories react to the job situation, it is first necessary to set the ground work by describing the conditions under which cab drivers are employed. Cab drivers are not employed under the same circumstances as most workers. Their employment status is somewhere between a self-employed independent contractor and a regular employee. This has an impact on hiring, working conditions and income.

The taxi industry exists within legal constructions that are very real in their consequences. There have been a series of court cases in the last decade that have had significant impact on the structure of the taxi industry. In labour relations legislation and for many of the benefit programs attendant to an "employee", cab drivers have been deemed to be "self employed". The portent of this Supreme Court of Canada decision is that the costs of employment are transferred from the cab company to the cab driver. The benefits of Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, company pension and health benefit plans and whatever benefits union membership might bring to an average worker in an average company are not part of the cab drivers world. Whatever benefits the driver may wish for himself are up to him to provide. As a previous study indicated, many drivers do not provide these benefits for themselves, perhaps because they cannot afford them ("Taxi Driver Safety in Alberta", The Report and Recommendations of an Interdepartmental Committee of the Alberta Government, Government of Alberta, February 1985). On the other hand, the status of self-employment allows the individual driver a certain flexibility as regards taxation.

However, in human rights legislation cab drivers are considered "employees" within the meaning of the Individual Rights Protection Act. So in one sense a cab driver works for a cab company, and in another sense he does not. This results in some considerable confusion in terms of what a driver might expect from the company, and what control the company might exercise over the driver and his business. In particular, it creates an ambiguity in "hiring" practices which may

bring about the appearance of discrimination to a greater degree than actually exists.

The practical effect of this legal environment is that cab companies function as "brokers" and are referred to as such. The broker provides to the cab driver the use of the livery (name and identifiable colours), a dispatch system, possibly the rights to work from closed cab stands, and in some cases other such support services as repairs, fuel, equipment financing, etc. The driver may "own" his cab or lease it from the broker or from another driver. A few drivers own several cabs. If the driver "owns" the cab, he is most likely to "sell" it to the broker for $1. The cab company then provides the city license and legally required insurance and leases the cab back to its "owner". This practice is not universal but likely 90% of the cabs have been transferred for this nominal sum. The cases where the "owner" retains "ownership" and obtains the city plate himself are thought to be limited to smaller companies where there is no significant benefit from fleet insurance discounts. Fifty-four percent of the drivers are "owners" while 15.6% lease from the cab brokers and 36.3% lease from other drivers. A very few drivers reported that they were actually employees, though they may have misunderstood the question, since none of the brokers interviewed indicated that they had "employee drivers".

The self-employed driver leases the cab from the broker for a "stand rent" that varies between companies and with the services provided. The driver keeps all the fares earned. Drivers are free to work when and where they choose.

Cab brokers therefore serve two markets: the riding public and the lessee drivers. Just as the cab companies compete for ridership, they may also compete for drivers. The driver is free to take himself and his vehicle from one broker to another, and this happens sometimes.

This unusual employment relationship between brokers and drivers combines aspects of the "master/servant" legal relationship typical of most employment, and

the "principal/agent" relationship of the kind that exists, say, between a homeowner and someone he engages to make repairs. It causes some management difficulties for brokers, as the interests of drivers and the riding public are not always the same, nor are the interests of the company identical to those of the driver. This creates unusual supervision problems for cab brokers since the broker's legal or contractual ability to give direction to an employee is not typical of most industries. For example, it limits the company's ability to influence the appearance of cabs and their drivers. Unclean cabs or cabs in poor repair have often been cited as an industry problem (although observations throughout the course of this study found no significant instance of either). Companies may wish higher standards for their cabs, as that would likely increase ridership and profit. Any particular driver may not see a direct benefit for the direct costs such standards would impose.

Most cab company officials lament the independent-mindedness of drivers and the resulting difficulties of improving the "product" presented to the customer. For their part, drivers appear to resent attempts by management to influence the way they go about their self-employed business. There are no well entrenched "rules" as to the rights and privileges of one party and another. Both believe they understand the rules, but their understandings are not always the same. This creates an environment in which allegations of unfair treatment against groups or an individual can easily arise.

As it is, the unusual relationship between cab drivers and cab companies has benefits and disadvantages that cut both ways. The driver has unusual freedom of working conditions, but no guarantee of income or fair treatment. The cab company is unencumbered with the usual administrative responsibilities of an employer while, at the same time, having little control over the conduct of business or defense against charges of unfair practices.

IS HIRING DISCRIMINATORY?

To become a cab driver in Edmonton an individual must pass provincial licensing requirements, present that license to the City along with proof of a recently completed defensive driving course and a criminal record check, and then meet any additional requirements of the broker. The broker's requirements vary with the broker, but most often constitute a test of knowledge of the city streets. This would appear to be a three-stage filtering process, but it seems, it is only at the level of the broker that the stream is effectively narrowed. During the course of the study several individuals were encountered who had obtained the city chauffeur license but had not obtained any work as a driver.

The broker may deem the prospective driver suitable or unsuitable, but that is not the same thing as giving the driver a job. In many lines of work it is relatively simple to decide whether there is an opening or not. In the taxi industry the situation is not so clear. For one thing, since the broker gets stand rent whether or not the cab driver makes a profit, there is an incentive to hire all the drivers that wish to work. This is tempered by the consideration that the driver who does not make money will not pay his stand rent and therefore not cover the insurance, licensing and other costs of the broker. The driver who presents himself for employment along with his own cab would have an advantage in most circumstances over the driver without his own car. This is the sense in which brokers compete for drivers as well as for customers. A company that makes itself most attractive to experienced drivers with good vehicles will end up with the largest fleet. This in turn will increase profits which come from stand rent. If such a strategy is also supported by good marketing the drivers too will do better.

Another aspect of this labour market is seasonal fluctuation. In warm weather, when this study was conducted, there were about 1000 cabs on Edmonton's streets. In winter the number is likely to rise to 1300. There were about 3000 licensed cab drivers. Many individuals keep their license to drive cab as a precaution against the loss of other employment or as something to do in

the times when demand increases or they do not have a better job.

Ultimately the ridership (the market for cabs) determines the number of cabs and drivers that will be working at any given time. Drivers enter and leave the market as their ability to make a living fluctuates. Companies are also looking for drivers and cabs, or not looking for them.

The driver may think that he was hired by and working for both a broker and another driver, equally, and at the same time. Again, a company and a driver might both feel they have hired a particular driver. All the while, that driver is, for purposes like income tax and practical supervision, self-employed.

The legal environment and the market conditions can thus result in a picture that is confusing to the prospective driver. To further complicate matters, cab companies operating in Edmonton vary greatly as to the amount of structure and organization within their firms. On one hand, a company may have a rigid set of criteria and exams required of the prospective driver, and on the other hand, a quiet word between friends may secure employment.

The impact of these friendship connections, or "networking", can be understood in terms of the difficulty of supervision in the cab business. It is less disquieting to turn over an expensive cab (often the owner's sole source of income) to someone who is known through family, religious or cultural circles, than to turn that cab over to a stranger. These friendship networks probably function as an informal "performance bond". Drivers who hire other drivers most frequently mentioned that they knew the people they hired.

It had been suggested in the press that some companies are harder to get a job with than others, that some company tests were tougher and even that they were openly biased (The Edmonton Sun, Wednesday June 14, 1989). In informal interviews some cab company officials identified individuals, no longer in the

business, who may have practiced prejudicial hiring. In order to assess the impact of these practices, drivers were asked about their personal experiences in looking for work and also their beliefs about hiring practices.

Of the drivers interviewed, 75% had not applied to other brokers before getting a job. Over 80% of Europeans and English speaking Canadians got jobs on the first try. In contrast, drivers from visible minorities got the first job applied for in 60% of the cases. Only 8% of all drivers applied to more than 2 companies before getting work. A majority (about 60%) of English speaking Canadian drivers and drivers of native ancestry reported that they did not have friends in the cab company when they got their jobs as drivers. For immigrant groups and visible minorities the proportions were reversed with about 60% reporting they had friends in the company prior to getting the job. A connection was also found between having friends at a company and the number of companies applied to before getting a job. Canucks and Natives were likely to get jobs on their first try, even if they did not have friends in the company. Europeans and Asian Indians were more likely to get a job on the first try if they already had friends in the company. Other Visible minorities were unlikely to get a job on the first try, regardless of whether they had friends in the company. Visible minorities had more difficulty obtaining a job as a taxi driver.

Drivers were asked to which companies they had unsuccessfully applied. No pattern emerged from the analysis of their answers. All companies were mentioned as having turned down several applicants, none more than others. There is, then, no evidence from the responses of drivers that some companies systematically discriminate by refusing to hire drivers from certain backgrounds. On the other hand, many drivers do believe companies discriminate and it was suggested that drivers from some groups simply never apply to certain companies because they "know" they will be turned down. This could be functioning like a self-fulfilling prophecy: companies do not hire from minority groups because those groups do not apply because they believe they will not be hired. It is also likely

that members of the same ethnic communities come to know of refusals, no matter how long ago they happened, and that knowledge passes into the "folk wisdom". In other words, a thing does not have to happen often for there to be a wide spread belief that it does.

In situations where people have to apply for many jobs before getting one they sometimes get discouraged and leave the market. As the sample consisted only of individuals who were driving or had driven it is not possible to assess the extent to which people stopped trying. However, the fact that almost no one had to apply to more than two places before getting work is consistent with the notion that most of these successful applicants entered the market with some foreknowledge of when and where to apply. The friendship network may account for some people knowing where their application might be well received.

The beliefs of drivers, as reported in the interviews, indicate that slightly more that half feel companies discriminate in favour of hiring the kinds of drivers those companies feel the public wants, so that some groups get left out (Figure 3). Drivers of European origins, Native and Other Visible minorities are split on the issue with about 40% on each side. English speaking Canadians (about 60%) and Asian Indian drivers (74%) believe companies discriminate in hiring. When questioned as to whether some cab companies make hiring tests harder for some groups than for others, 85% of the Asian Indians agreed and 77% of the European drivers disagreed. The other groups were evenly divided on the question. Over a quarter of the sample did not know how to respond to this last question. Not surprisingly, groups that were named as the targets of discrimination are acutely aware of it. Members of all groups, to some degree, believe that there is discrimination in hiring practices.

Drivers who think companies do not discriminate in hiring and those who think companies should not

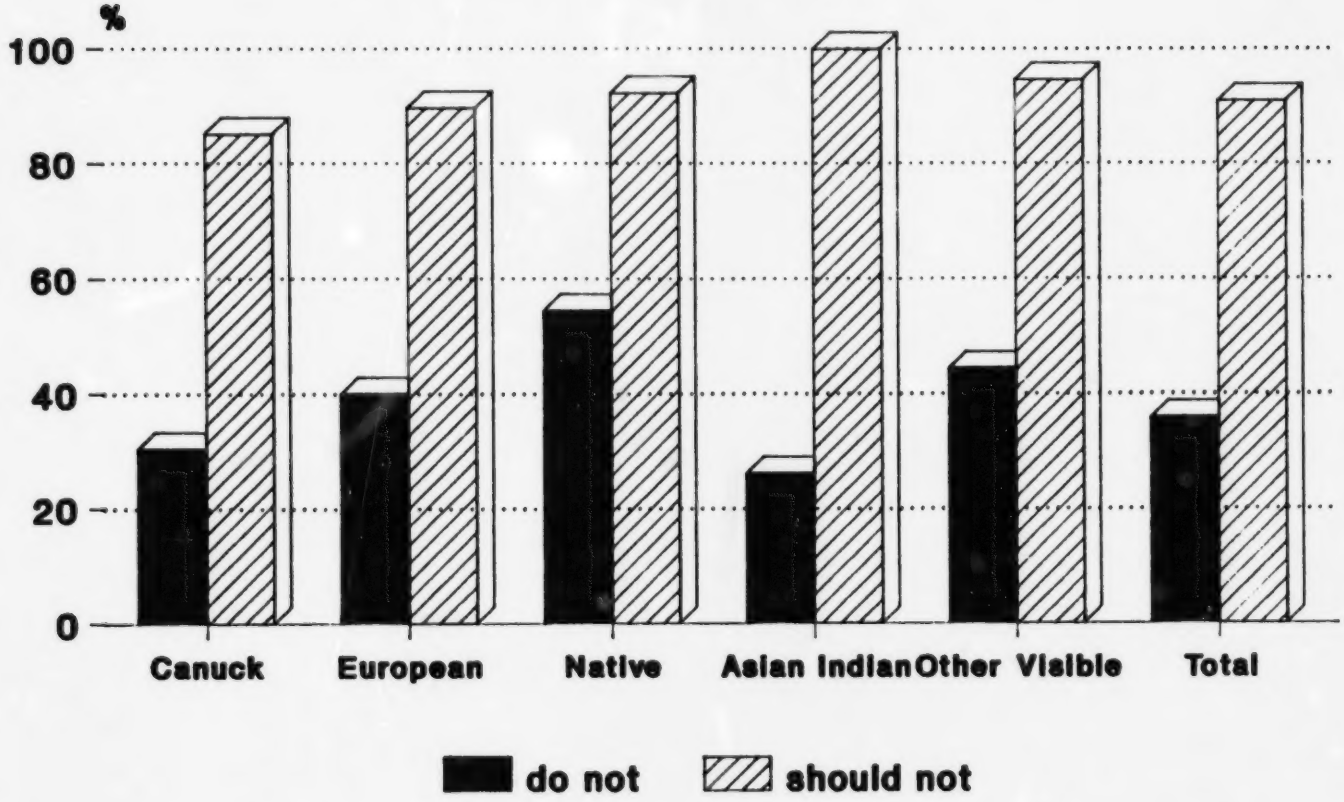


Figure 3

For the most part, cab drivers believe there is discrimination in hiring practices; but they are nearly unanimous in their belief that "cab companies should hire any qualified driver regardless of his colour or background". Over 90% of drivers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. It should not be overlooked at this point that nearly one in ten do not agree with this "motherhood" statement of basic equality. The strong support for the ideal of equality of opportunity is contrasted with the belief that this is not, in fact the case. The strong support shown for this ideal by Canuck and European drivers indicates that opinion of this point is not split along racial lines. Everyone believes in equality of opportunity, although the groups differ in their opinion as to how much equality there is in practice.

Another way to look at hiring practices is to consider who actually works for a company rather than who may have applied to work there. Individual companies cannot be discussed but the overall pattern is subject to fair comment. Immigrant groups and visible minorities are not distributed equally between the cab brokers. Part of the explanation for this is in the history and marketing strategy of the companies. Cab driving is a type of employment open to immigrants when other fields might be closed for reasons of language or required educational qualifications. Canada's immigration patterns change with the years as a preponderance of immigrants may come from one country, then from another. Companies that were formed or expanding when a certain group of immigrants arrived are likely to have drivers from that group. Friendship networks play an important part in continuing to draw members of one group to one company and precluding them from working for another. Cab driving is not an open labour market in which all companies are equally assessable to all drivers, nor is it a closed market where any group is systematically excluded from employment.

Differing hiring practices, varying degrees of formality, personal contacts and demand fluctuations all contribute to the chance of an individual becoming a cab

driver for a particular company at a particular time. However, the differences between companies are so striking that history and friendship might not be a full explanation. For example, 82% of the Asian Indians in the sample where with one company while 49% of the Canucks where with another which also had 54% of the (admittedly few) natives. None of the divisions are along clear racial or ethnic lines, but the pattern appears to be more than mere coincidence could explain.

A further element contributing to the explanation may be the belief that "the customer is always right". The argument made by some in the taxi industry is that discriminatory hiring is justified by customer preference. It is "good business practice" to provide customers with the types of drivers they prefer. This is discriminatory. The legality of this view is one issue. The other issue is whether there is any support in fact for such a view. Part of this study, reported on more fully in a following section, was to monitor customer calls for cabs. The analysis of incoming calls from clients revealed so little overt customer bias as to be virtually non-existent. On the other hand, many drivers from all ethnic groups believe this bias exists. To some extent, drivers and brokers may have created another self-fulfilling prophecy that is perpetuated independently of any preferences customers may actually exhibit.

Drivers were asked two questions that bare on this point. They were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "Customers should have the right to ask the company to send a white driver." and, "There are some companies you can call to insure you get a white driver." Thirty percent of drivers agreed with the discriminatory attitude that the customer has a right to request a white driver and 47.1% agreed that there are companies who will send a white driver when asked. The following chart (Figure 4) shows how the groups differ in their perception of this situation. As "self interest" would suggest, over 40% of the "white" drivers agree that a customer has the right to ask for a white driver while only 15.3% of "non-white" drivers agree. The following chart shows the answers to these questions and the differences between groups.

Drivers who agree some companies will provide a white driver and those who agree the customer has a right to ask

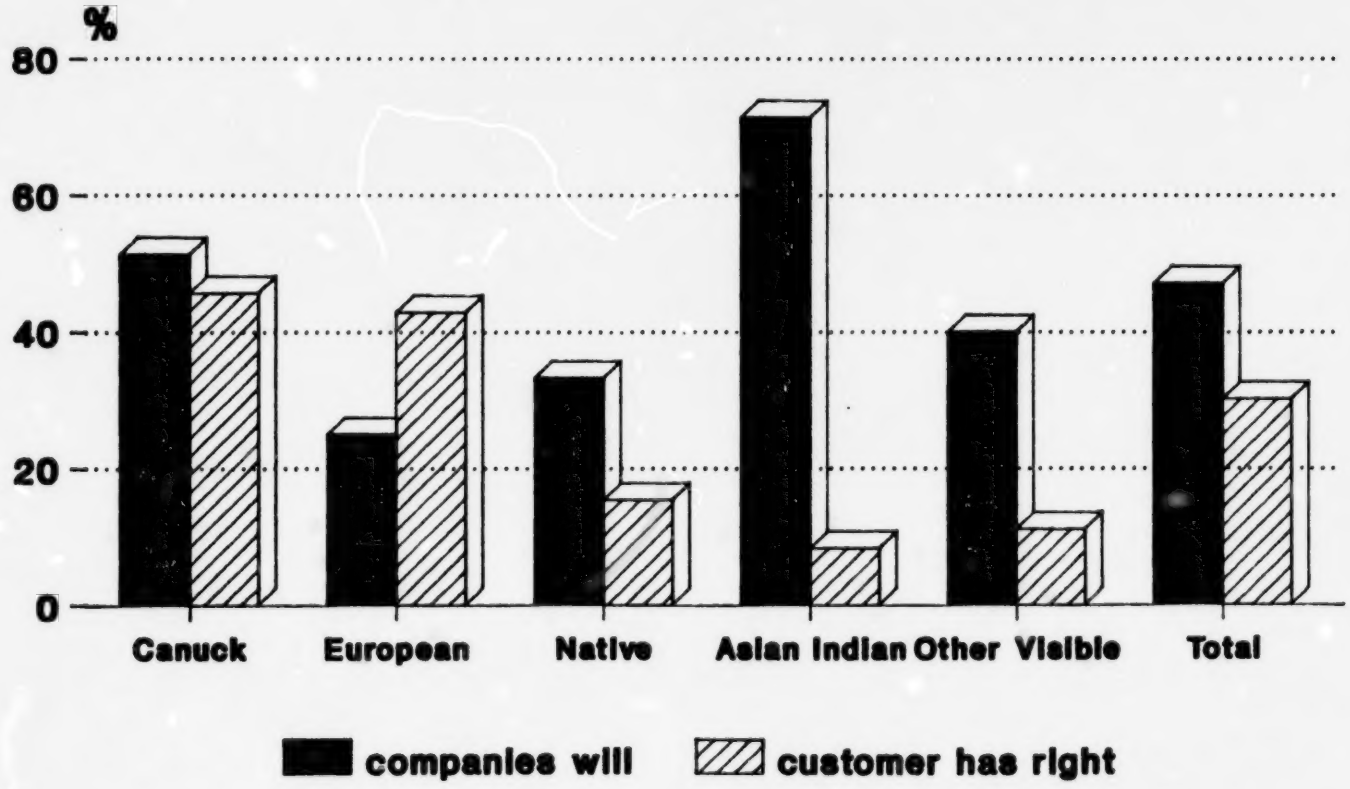


Figure 4

The notion that the public should have the right to ask for a white driver and the notion that qualified drivers should be hired regardless of colour or background are, to a degree, contradictory. One attitude says that racism among customers is acceptable and ought to be catered to, while the second says that racism in hiring is unacceptable and ought not to be catered to. In the long run, the industry cannot have it both ways. The values here are contradictory, but about one quarter of the drivers agree with both. Fully one third of the white drivers hold both opinions while one in ten of the visible minorities agree with both. It is clear that to agree with a customers' right to request a white driver is either to hold a racist opinion or to condone it in others. It is also clear that the strong service orientation in the business ("the customer is always right") is also a deeply held value. This must place many in the cab business in a difficult position. In the interviews with company officials this difficulty surfaced on several occasions. Some of the respondents were aware of the conflict and were confused as to what they should do, while others had come down firmly on one side or the other.

As to whether companies will send a white driver, the study found no evidence that they would. In cases where a particular car, driver, or class of driver was requested, the caller was told something to the effect that "the first car available" would be sent. This was the practice among the companies who participated in the study. There was no indication that their procedures had been changed for the benefit of the observers since, in some cases, records were available for examination that predated the study and they showed the same procedure.

Because of the unequal distribution of "white" and "non-white" drivers between cab companies, the chances of a customer getting a white driver by calling a particular company are not random. Some people in the business believe this is the level at which discrimination operates. It is not necessary for a customer to request a certain type of driver, it is only necessary to call a certain type of

company. Equally, it is not necessary for that company to agree to send a "white" driver, since the driver they send will, in all likelihood, be white. This is not an overt form of discrimination or racism, but its effect is the same. It is not possible with a study of this type to judge whether the public is, to any great degree, aware of the ethnic composition of the various cab companies. There is however some evidence from the comments of a few people in the business that they consider the "purity" of their fleets as a strong selling point with the public.

DOES CUSTOMER DISCRIMINATION INFLUENCE WHO GETS TRIPS?

It has been thought by some that a significant number of customers calling cab companies request that the driver sent not be a member of a visible minority. This study could not substantiate that claim.

Since neither customers, nor the general public were interviewed in this study their attitudes are being inferred from the nature of the calls they make to cab companies. Had questions about preference in drivers been asked as part of a general social survey, customer attitudes could have been measured accurately whether or not those attitudes were voiced as racist calls to cab companies.

Trained observers were placed in several cab company dispatching offices where they were allowed to monitor incoming calls at randomly selected time intervals extending over several weeks. These observers recorded 6737 calls in 139 hours, 35 minutes.

In all but the smallest companies dispatching a cab is a two-stage operation. One person receives the call and takes the particulars of the pickup or "load" (the telephone operator). A second person, the dispatcher, transfers this information by radio to a cab. In the case of one company, the "dispatcher" is a computer that matches available cabs with the location of the pickup. Dispatching offices are typically rather small and very busy. For example, a large company on a

busy day can receive in excess of 1000 calls per hour. The presence of observers in these offices was a significant inconvenience to the company personnel who, nonetheless, were consistently helpful during the course of the study.

Of all the calls listened to by the observers, only one was racially discriminatory. The call will be recounted verbatim though the caller's words include an unacceptable racial slur. In this case a male individual called a cab company from a hotel and said "Do me a favour, no Boat People please". The operator replied "No, I'm sorry we can't send any specific driver. You'll have to take who comes first. Do you still want a cab?", to which the caller replied "yes".

In some cases, cab company telephone operators were instructed by their supervisors to make a note of any discriminatory calls. About 100,000 calls were received during the period operators were under these instructions. One further discriminatory call was observed by this method and is, again, presented verbatim. In this case the caller said "Don't send a Paki."

One racially discriminatory call was heard by researchers out of several thousand calls monitored. One further call was reported by company telephone operators who monitored tens of thousands of calls during the period of the study. The incidence of blatant customer generated discrimination manifested in telephone requests for taxis appears to be so low that it cannot be measured or discussed in the terms usually associated with social phenomena.

It is possible that the publicity attendant to the study resulted in some crank calls. In one case, shortly after media reports that this study was underway, a caller requested an 'East Indian' driver. Upon being told that he must take the first available car he replied "Can't you take a joke". In another case, an operator said "Someone requested a 'white' driver, but I recognized his voice. It was one of our drivers."

Several individuals were interviewed who had worked as dispatchers and who had been in the business for years. Most of them remarked that there used to be more racially discriminatory calls than there are today. Their assessment of the number of discriminatory calls at the present time was consistent with the observations. As one person summed it up, "Sure it happens, but hardly ever."

Customers calling cab companies did request particular services or express preferences from time to time. The following examples show the types of requests made.

CALLER: "Please send a smoking cab."

CALLER: "Don't send number xxx. I had him last time and he took me the long way around."

CALLER: "I see a bunch of cabs outside but I don't like them, I want you (your company)."

CALLER "Can you deliver money?" OPERATOR "No."

CALLER "I need a boost (of a dead battery), send a car with cables."

CALLER "Can you go to the bar and pick up a case of beer and deliver it?" OPERATOR "No, you have to take the cab yourself and go in and get it."

The strong service orientation of the taxi industry was noted in the interactions between callers and telephone operators. In almost all cases the operators were polite and tried to accommodate the callers, whether it was for a pickup at a certain time, a station wagon to haul boxes, a wake-up call before a trip to the airport, and so on. The operators are thoroughly embued with the idea that the

"customer is always right". The observers were surprised to note that a fair number of callers requesting cabs do not actually know where they are. The telephone operators often had to use creative cross-examination techniques to help the customer discover his or her location.

The exception to the companies' helpfulness is in dealing with requests for a particular driver. The companies who took part in the study appear uniform in their policy that the first available cab will be dispatched. They also appear consistent in the administration of this policy. Only one case was observed where a cab with a particular number was requested and that cab was subsequently dispatched.

Dispatching, and whether it might be a source of discrimination, is a closely related subject. Dispatching is the toughest job in the cab industry. It is similar to the stressful work situation of air traffic controllers. Dispatchers are usually former cab drivers who know the city, the drivers and the business. Depending on how the office is set up, they must keep a mental picture of where cabs are, where they are going, which ones are free and where they are needed. It was a common view in the industry that, as one manager summed it up, "Dispatchers last about two years before they burn out."

It is technically possible for dispatchers in most companies to "feed" good trips to favoured drivers. Whether it is practical for them to do this to any great degree is another question. The work usually flows fast and matching available cars with passengers in a hurry leaves the dispatcher little time to think of other things. If it were done systematically to the disadvantage of any ethnic category, it would have shown up in the income figures. It did not. It is more likely that dispatchers could favour individuals as opposed to whole groups. The study did not find evidence to support this, but if it happens, it was unlikely to happen while the dispatcher was being watched.

For their part, about 30% of the drivers report that they have had experience of the dispatcher favouring other drivers over themselves, though this need not be associated with discrimination. Among the Asian Indians, 64% report this experience.

Dispatchers are under stress and harsh words are sometimes exchanged between drivers and dispatchers, sometimes with racial or uncomplimentary overtones in both directions. However, it does not seem to be the case that the public phone requests supply the telephone operators with any basis to discriminate. The process of transferring the information from telephone operator to dispatcher further limits the chances for discrimination, as the dispatcher knows only the information supplied by the telephone operator. On the dispatchers' part it seems possible, and even likely, that favours sometimes get done for friends. It seems unlikely that dispatchers discriminate for or against any of the ethnic categories, though a study of this type cannot establish the point.

DRIVER EXPERIENCE OF CUSTOMER DISCRIMINATION

Taxi drivers are in a good position to judge whether the riding public discriminates against any particular group of drivers. With the many fares they take day in and day out, they are going to become aware of the phenomenon if it exists. It is not only the drivers who are discriminated against who will see it. Drivers are in a position to judge if discrimination is exercised in their favour or against any group whether or not they are members of that group. Drivers were asked "Does the cab riding public discriminate against any particular ethnic groups (people who are different from them)?". The answers are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4 Does the cab riding public discriminate?

	No %	Yes %
Canuck	14.6	85.4
European	44.8	55.2
Native	15.4	84.6
Asian Indian	24.0	76.0
Other Visible	36.8	63.2
Total	26.1	73.9

Two features of this table are striking: three-quarters of the drivers say the public discriminates; and, seven out of eight Canucks (the only category expected to suffer no discrimination themselves) say the cab riding public discriminates against some ethnic groups. Too many drivers report discrimination for the perception to be the product of heightened sensitivities or self interest. Without saying how often it happens or what portion of the public are involved, the way cab drivers see it, the public does discriminate on racial grounds.

Drivers who agreed that there was discrimination were then asked to name the ethnic groups they though were the targets of the public's discrimination. The respondents named the ethnicities in their own words so the groups mentioned are not necessarily consistent with the usage in this report. As would be expected, there was a certain amount of self selection among the visible minorities who cited the groups to which they belonged as the prime targets of public discrimination. However, this self selection only accounted for about one half the responses. Asian Indians were named as the targets of public discrimination by a

huge majority of respondents: 86.5% named an Asian Indian ethnicity (such as 'East Indian', 'Pakistani' or 'Sikh') as the first named group, and; of those that named a second ethnicity, a further 64.8 identified an Asian Indian ethnicity. The other ethnic groups mentioned were 'Chinese', 'Black', 'Coloured', 'Indian'(North American), 'Lebanese', 'Arab', 'Muslim', and 'Oriental'.

The basis of the drivers' knowledge of discrimination is in their personal experiences. Drivers were asked about the types of discrimination they knew from personal experiences and to describe what happened. Not all the drivers who said they had personal experiences of discrimination would describe the incidents they had in mind. Of those who would speak, the stories they told were sometimes very disturbing and from their answers it was clear how deeply people can be hurt by discrimination. For example, one long time European driver recounted how, over thirty years ago, he was frequently called by a derogatory ethnic name and how, to this day, the memory hurts him. Many of the accounts were from drivers who told of how discrimination had worked in there favour rather than against them. For example some Canuck drivers reported that they got extra trips because customers passed up cabs with Asian Indian drivers and took their cabs instead. In many cases drivers recounted incidents but declined to say what their personal involvement in the situation had been.

Table 5 Personal experiences of discrimination

Discrimination because of:	Against Me %	For me %	Un-named %	Total %
language	3.7	5.9	20.8	30.4
race/skin colour	13.3	19.3	21.5	54.1
ethnic background	7.4	7.4	18.5	33.3

This table should be interpreted with caution as it cannot be known to what extent the categories overlapped in the minds of the respondents. For example, what one individual might choose to interpret as racial might, to another, appear as ethnic. It is also likely that the discrimination "against me" column is under-reported as some people would feel embarrassed to describe themselves as the butt of an humiliating situation.

When Tables 4 and 5 are considered together it becomes clear that there are more drivers who believe the public discriminates than there are drivers who have personally experienced that discrimination. This is what would be expected as parts of anyone's knowledge of the world comes at second had. This is a point of some importance because it is possible for a relatively few incidents of blatant racism or discrimination to become widely known and to form the basis for many individuals' belief in the prevalence of the phenomenon. In other words, it need not take many racists or racist actions to establish a climate of racism. However, for cab drivers, the situation seems to be more than that. Over half the cab drivers in Edmonton believe there is racial discrimination because they have seen it with their own eyes.

Another way to look at this information is to consider the ethnic categories in term of the portion that believe the public discriminates against ethnic groups. This is plotted against the portion that have had first hand experience of discrimination because of race or skin colour and presented in Figure 5 below. The Europeans are less likely to believe the public discriminates and less likely to have personal experience of racial discrimination. This may be because they most typically work in companies that are less racially mixed than some others and, therefore, may have less first hand exposure to situations with a potential for racial discrimination.

Drivers who believe public discrimates & those who know the public discriminates from their personal experiences

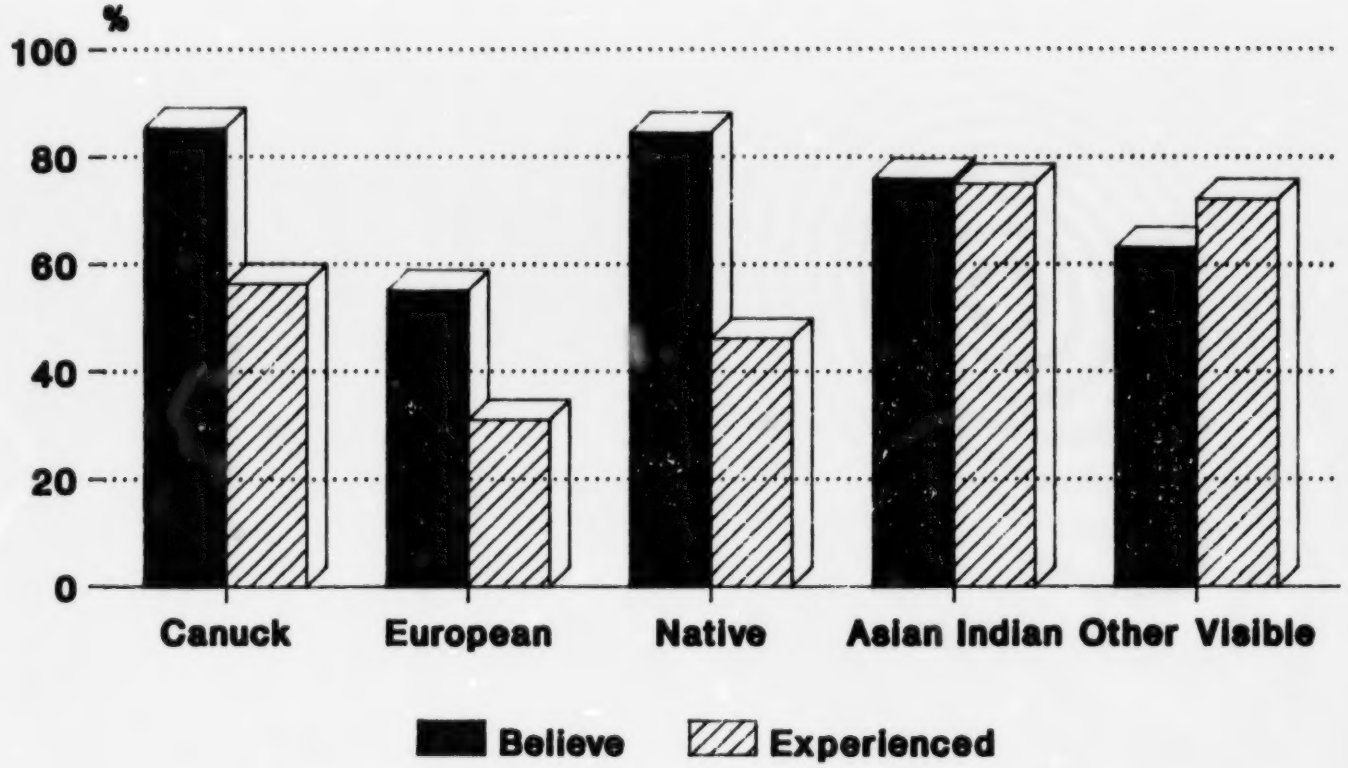


Figure 5

PROBLEMS CAB DRIVERS HAVE WITH CUSTOMERS AND PEOPLE AT WORK

Social scientists sometimes speak of "operationalizing" a concept. This means to define an idea in terms of things that can be measured, real things that actually happen. Abstract ideas like 'racism' and 'discrimination' can be operationalized in terms of stressful and unpleasant situations peppered throughout an individuals life. Someone who has been systematically discriminated against might remember the discrimination as a series of confrontational situations, arguments, fights, name calling, missed opportunities and the like. It is possible to look at cab driving in this way.

An earlier study called "Taxi Driver Safety in Alberta" (Government of Alberta, February 1985) asked drivers to identify serious problems they faced at work. Based on the results of that study, it was possible to identify a number of stressful and confrontational situations faced by cab drivers. Concerning customers, the situations where: a) a customer skips out without paying, b) a customer picks a cab other than the first one at the stand, c) a customer is rude or calls you names, d) threatened by a customer, e) assaulted by a customer, and f) a customer complains to the company about you. In terms of the business, the situations where: a) arguments with other drivers, b) fares scooped by other drivers, c) arguments with a dispatcher, d) a dispatcher favours other drivers over you, e) disciplined or suspended by the cab company, and f) terminated by a broker.

Drivers interviewed for this study where asked which situations had happened to them and, if it happened, how big a problem it was. The answers about "how big a problem it was" were interesting but not useful. Cab drivers are a "macho" lot. No matter what happened to them, they were disinclined to describe it as much of a problem. By way of example, one driver said "A passenger held me at knife point for two hours, but it was no big deal".

The answers to the questions about problems with customers show cab driving to be a stressful and dangerous occupation. There were only very small differences between the ethnic categories with everyone experiencing the same kinds of problems. A customer skipping out with out paying had happened to 88.9% of the drivers, while 74.1 reported rude customers and name calling incidents. It is obvious that the job of cab driving is dangerous as 58.5% of drivers reported being threatened by a customer and 38.5% reported that they had actually been assaulted. By comparison the "Taxi Driver Safety Study" found that 75% of drivers had been cheated, 38% had been threatened and 15% had been assaulted. The figures from this study are appreciably higher. The studies did not use the same method so comparisons should be made with caution. However, those responsible for the oversight of the taxi industry should be alerted to the possibility that violence against taxi drivers may have increased in the last five years.

The question about customers picking a cab other than the first one at the stand needs to be considered in detail. Drivers were being asked if they had ever had this difficulty with customers. The results are an indication of which ethnic categories have had this experience.

Table 6	Drivers who saw customers pick cabs not at the head of the line %	
	Canuck	**52.1**
	European	**50.0**
	Native	**76.9**
	Asian Indian	**72.0**
	Other Visible	**63.2**
	Total	**59.3**

Drivers from visible minorities report having experienced their cab being passed up for another more often than do the 'whites'. When a customer picks a cab other than the first in line is the customer always discriminating on the basis of the driver's visible ethnicity? That notion cannot explain why 50% of the white drivers have had it happen to them, unless a lot of visible minorities pick visible minority drivers. Customers having business accounts with one of the companies, as discussed earlier, might be part of the explanation. Other parts of the explanation may be customer preference or loyalty to a particular company, a customer's preference for a particular make of car, the general appearance of the cab and so on. Whatever it is that customers are doing, it cannot be explained solely in terms of racial discrimination, nor can racial discrimination be ruled out as part of the explanation.

The questions concerning problems with other people in the taxi business produced results which varied more between the ethnic categories. The most striking finding is that for most of the problem situations queried the drivers

reported no problems. When problems where reported the Asian Indians were more likely to report them and the Natives and Europeans less likely. For whatever reasons Natives and Europeans seem more successful, and Asian Indians less successful, in avoiding confrontational situations. One of the questions asked concerned arguments with other drivers and another concerned arguments with dispatchers.

Table 7 Drivers who have arguments

	With other drivers %	With dispatchers %
Canuck	**47.9**	**22.9**
European	**26.7**	**13.3**
Native	**30.8**	**0**
Asian Indian	**68.0**	**76.0**
Other Visible	**31.6**	**31.6**

Figure 6 presents a comparison between troubles with customers and troubles with co-workers as experienced by each of the ethnic categories. Each time a driver reported having had a particular problem that was added to the total and averaged for all the drivers in the ethnic category. The average number of problems with customers for all the ethnic categories was between three and four of a possible top score of six. On the other hand, the average was about two out of a possible six for problems with others at work. The average for Natives was lowest at a little over one and that for Asian Indians was highest at a little over three.

Troubles with customers and troubles with others at work

average number of types reported

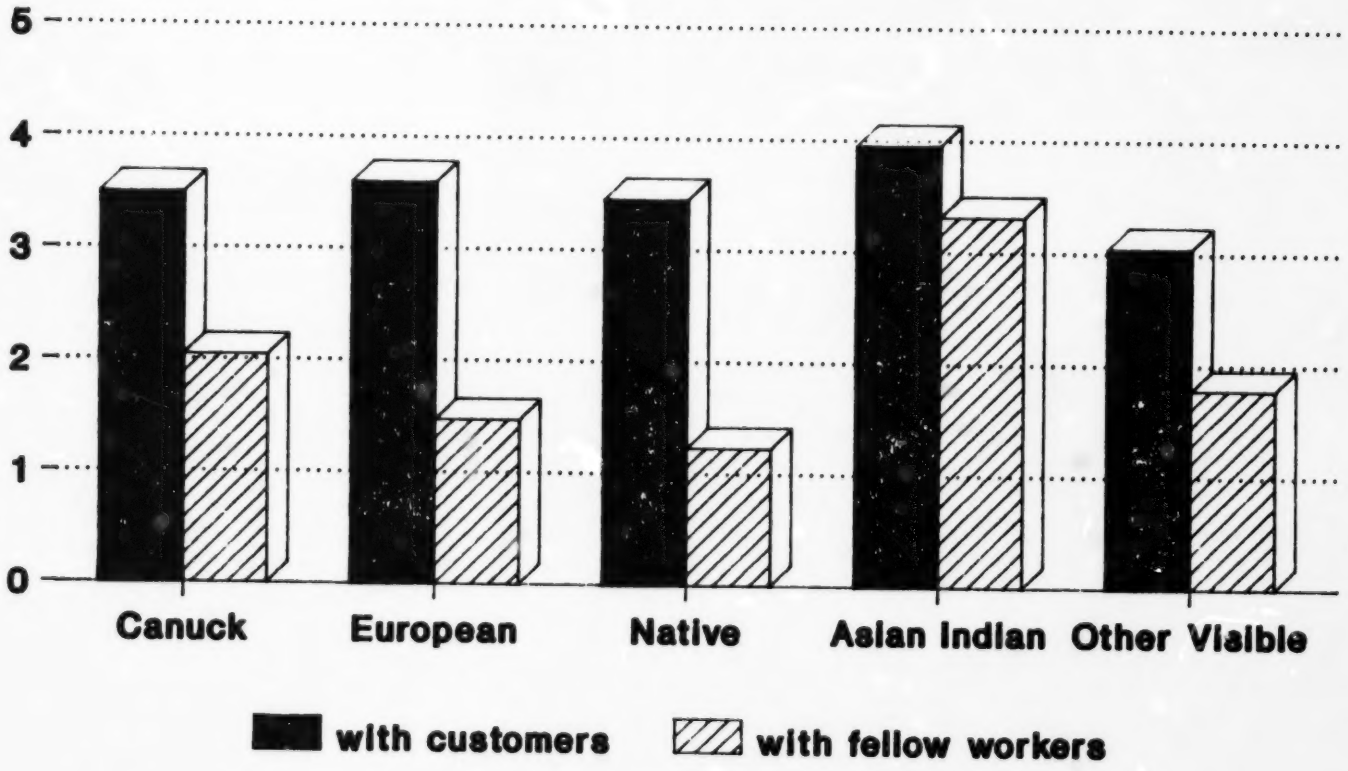


Figure 6

After the drivers had answered the questions about the problem situations they had encountered with customers and co-workers, they were asked to explain in general terms what they thought caused the problems with customers and fellow workers. The importance of these questions is that people can have the same types of experiences but explain them differently. The things individuals will see as the causes of their problems can differ with their personal experiences and with the collective experiences of the groups with which they identify. Indeed, there were differences between the ethnic categories.

The most frequent answers as to what caused problems with customers concerned the customers themselves. Most drivers cited something to do with the customer's attitude: the customer was tired, rushed, argumentative, rude, wanted a ride but not to pay for it, and so on. Drivers singled out customer drunkenness for special mention. About 20% of drivers cited this as, generally, the source of their problems with customers. (As an aside, some cab companies are targeting the late night drinker who should not drive himself as a prime source of business. Several drivers reported that they specialized in this clientele. It would appear from the answers of drivers that the cab companies are successfully penetrating this market. If this is so, it is yet another social service provided by the taxi industry - one of immense benefit to society.) About 15% of the drivers accepted blame for themselves or their companies for causing problems with passengers. They acknowledge that a lost or late driver, or a driver who is himself in a bad mood, may expect a displeased passenger.

Only 9.2% of drivers listed racism or prejudice as the cause of problems between drivers and passengers. This puts the problem of racism in perspective with the other problems faced by cab drivers. The way the drivers tell it, if they get a customer who is calm, sane, sober, knows where he wants to go and can pay, then that is a good trip.

It should be noted that racism can cut both ways and individuals of any ethnic identification can stereotype others and use that as an explanation of

problems, just as anyone can be the victim of the stereotypes of others. Among the drivers who answered in terms of racism, some were racists and some saw themselves as the victims of the racism of others. The result was the same: problem situations caused by racism. Thus, some 'whites' explained problems in terms of stereotypical portraits of the 'poor' or 'natives' or 'immigrants', while some 'non-whites' did the same. Though these cases were very few in number they serve to make the point that feelings run deep on all sides.

Racism is an element in the working situation of drivers but it is not reported by drivers themselves as the major cause of their problems, even for the visible minorities. However, there are important differences between the ethnic categories in the proportion of individuals who cite racism as the major cause of problems with customers. Of the Canucks, 4.2% cited racism as the major cause of problems, 3.4% of the Europeans and 7.7% of the Natives did the same. Seventeen percent of the Asian Indians and 22.2% of the Other Visible minorities cited racism as the major cause of problems with customers. Although the percentages are small, with the exception of Natives, drivers from visible minorities were four or five times more likely to explain customer problems in terms of racism. There is less consistency here than might have been expected from the wide spread acknowledgement of customer discrimination. The explanation might lie in the realization that a two stage process is being discussed. Firstly, there has to be a problem. Secondly, the driver has to impute a motive to the passenger with which he is having the problem. It is very likely that some passengers treat drivers from the various ethnic categories differently. It is also likely that similar behaviour on the part of passengers could be interpreted differently by drivers of different backgrounds. Figure 7 presents the various explanations for problems with customers.

How drivers explain problems with customers

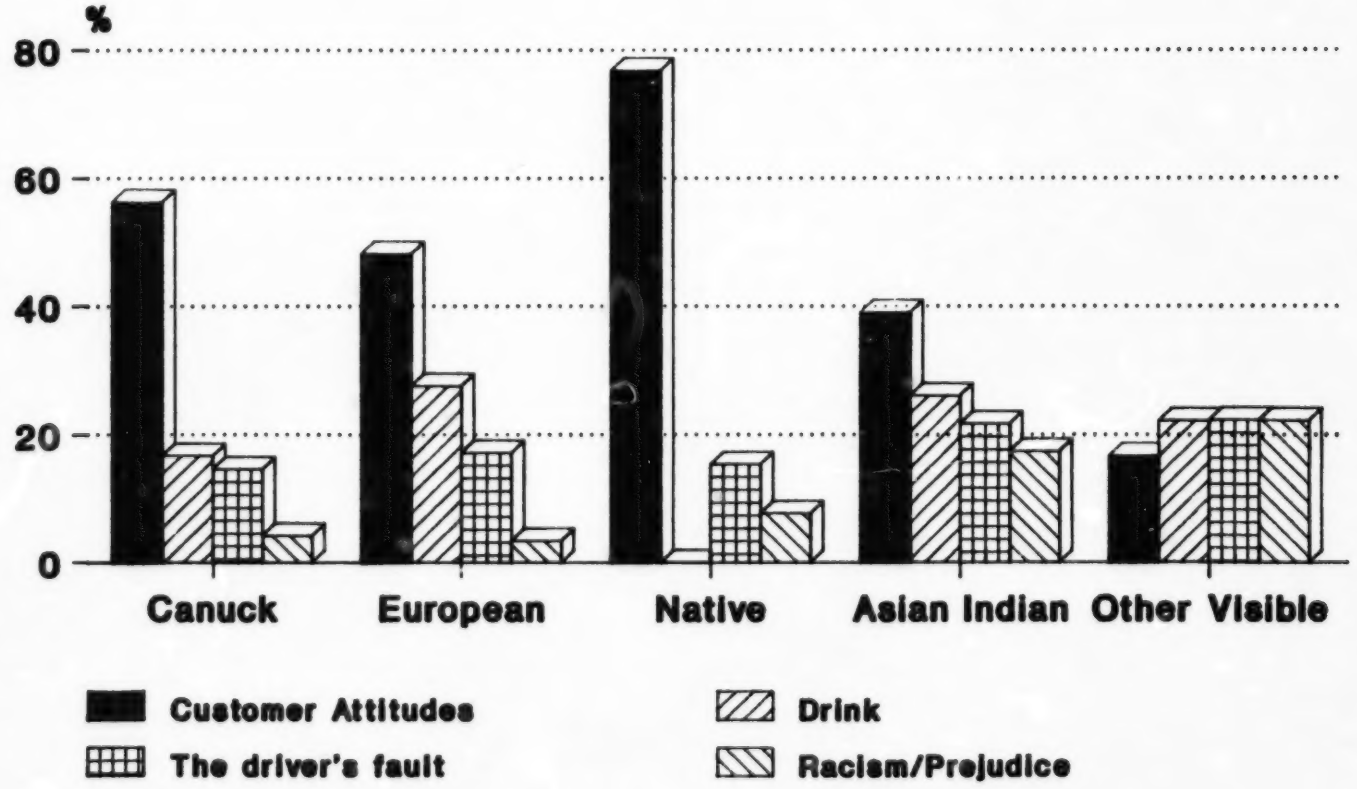


Figure 7

The explanations drivers offer for problems with co-workers differ in important ways from the explanations concerning customers. For one thing, 40% of the drivers did not feel they had any problems to explain. That is an interesting outcome when it is considered against the earlier discussion of job satisfaction. Those who have no problems with co-workers to report are split evenly between being satisfied and dissatisfied with their jobs as cab drivers. This lends further support to the notion that low pay rather than the working environment is the cause of job dissatisfaction.

The primary cause of problems in the workplace is simple 'personality conflict'. This might be with other drivers, dispatchers, with the company managers, and so on. This is one way in which cab driving does resemble most other jobs.

The second most prevalent explanation was competition or greed. This makes sense when considered along with the self-employed status of the driver, his freedom to work as long as he chooses, the ability in many situations to scoop fares (load a passenger for which some other car has been dispatched before that other car arrives) and so on. Natives and Other Visible minorities give competition as much or more importance than they give to personality conflicts. Striking by comparison are the responses of the Asian Indians. Not one cited competition and greed as a source of problems with co-workers. Through their answers to a variety of questions, the Asian Indians as a group showed themselves to be hard working and achievement oriented with personal goals lying beyond cab driving. To them it could be that competition does not explain problems, rather it explains success. By comparison, the other ethnic categories were less consistently ambitious. It may be the case that Asian Indians have a hand in generating the competition which others identify as a source of problems. Some drivers made pointed comments to this effect.

The economic competition discussed above may play a part in explaining why some drivers cite racism as a major cause of problems in the workplace. It has

often been noted in the literature on race relations that groups who find themselves competing in situations of scarcity develop racist attitudes towards one another. One's own failures in the market place, as well as the successes of others, can often be explained away in terms of unfair advantage. In the case of the taxi industry, no ethnic category does a lot better than any other, as the results presented earlier showed. Still, the struggle to maintain a grip on a low rung of the economic ladder may be as fierce as the battles that go on higher up.

Eight percent of the Other Visible minorities gave racism as the major source of their problems with other workers, 11.5% of the Europeans and 13.3% of the Canucks did the same, with the percentages climbing to 15.4% for Natives and 21.7% for Asian Indians. Figure 8 presents a comparison of causes.

How drivers explain problems at work

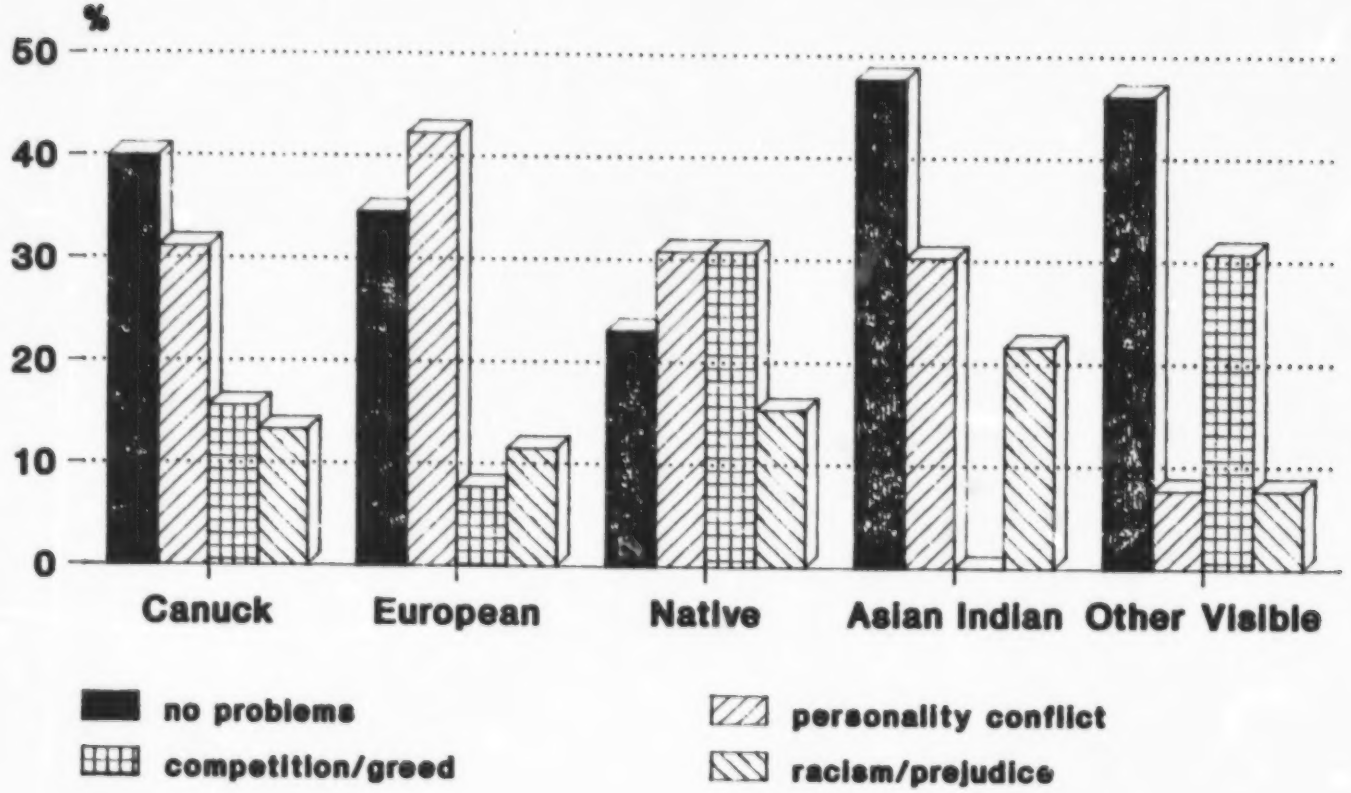


Figure 8

THE EFFECT OF THE FREE MARKET

The taxi industry in Edmonton is highly competitive and individualistic in nature. It provides a strong example of the operations and consequences of the free market. Virtually everywhere else in North America, the number of cabs and drivers in a city is limited by the local authority. In Edmonton, the industry is open. The resources required to set up a cab company are modest compared to many other businesses and those required to become a driver are very low indeed. The effect of this is that Edmonton has an ample supply of cabs, its citizens have little difficulty getting a cab, and probably pay comparatively less for it. Travellers to other cities are aware of this.

The marketing strategies of individual companies reflect the intention of increasing revenue and decreasing competition by niche marketing. One company might specialize in cab stands and an other in sophisticated dispatch equipment, one in the east end of the city, another in the west. Within the companies, the driver himself can specialize further, working only one area or stand, specializing in business customers, senior citizens, and so on. Some parts of town are dangerous, the trips short and the customers are sometimes unable to pay. Most drivers who can avoid these areas do so. Some who cannot avoid these area have actually specialized in them. Regardless of such strategies the market remains extremely competitive.

The other side of the equation is that many cabs are "for hire" for long periods with a surfeit of drivers chasing a paucity of fares. The market is open, self regulating and performs the service expected of it. It also emiserates its drivers. With only a few exceptions, those working in these market conditions could only reasonably be thought to do so because more lucrative opportunities are not open to them. In other words, this is a "bottom end" sector of the economy and a catchment for workers without the personal or collective power to do something else. That immigrant and minority groups are over-represented in this market speaks to the systemic difficulties they face.

Many cab drivers support the notion that the number of cab licenses should be limited as it is in most cities. If this were to happen, those who already hold licenses would receive a windfall. A Cab plate in many cities can run to tens of thousands of dollars. One was recently reported sold in Vancouver for over $100,000 and Toronto prices are similar. It is also likely that it would ultimately increase the cost of cab rides, decrease the supply and degradate the service. Since almost all the cab plates in Edmonton are held in the name of the brokers it would not do much for the drivers. If the drivers were to hold the plates, as they do in many cities it would likely bring about a significant change in the ethnic composition of the business. Most immigrants could no longer afford to be cab drivers, and cab driving would cease to be an occupation of last resort. Language difficulties, lack of qualifications accepted in Canada, or discrimination would push people into other service industries where their income and opportunities would be about the same as they now are in cab driving. There may be a number of reasons to support or oppose changes in the industry structure, as are called for from time to time. However, it is unlikely that the bettering of conditions for those now driving would be one of the long term effects of such a change. If such a change were to take place, drivers of the future would be better off, but they would not be the same people, or from the same backgrounds, as the drivers of today.

GROUPS VIEW THEIR COMMON EXPERIENCES DIFFERENTLY

Up to this point the report has dealt in notions that can be related simply and directly to the data. There are limits to how many explanations can be extracted from a limited set of interviews. There are also difficulties in presenting the results of more refined statistical procedures in a format that can be readily understood. Yet, the account of what is happening in the cab industry would be incomplete without an attempt to tie the various strands together with comments at a more general level. For these reasons the following section will be more speculative than what has gone before. The ideas put forward can serve as aids to understanding.

The ethnic categories constructed to aid with the interpretation of the data can now be reconsidered in light of the results. These categories did work because they divulged differences between them on important issues and work experiences of drivers. They also show which aspects of the occupation are the same for all drivers.

First, cab driving is a difficult way to make a living for almost all concerned. A relatively small group of career drivers have invested the years and resources into the business to make an average living. The common experience is one of hard work and low income. The second common feature is that customers are often a source of trouble. Third, there are tensions in the workplace, as there are in all occupations. While these are common experiences, those in the ethnic categories view them differently.

Canucks are members of the dominant culture. As such they will not, nor can they, understand at depth what it is like to look different, speak with a different accent, and be discriminated against just because of those unimportant differences. As a group, they are aware of what is going on but they do not take it personally because for them it is not personal. The Canucks are in part career drivers and in part people drifting in and out of the business. Some of them seem to be "loners" who enjoy the lifestyle and freedom from supervision cab driving offers. This group contains the television stereotypes of "the author" and "the actor" who are just driving cab until they get the big break. Cab driving is the type of occupation which can accommodate individuals who's central focus is elsewhere. They are sensitive to the discrimination they see, but it is not their direct concern. They are also of two minds about racism. They think hiring should be fair and they think customers have the right to choose drivers or racial criteria. There are a few blatant racists among the Canucks, but not many. More frequently Canucks are passive about the overt racism of others and do not take objection to it.

The Europeans are not a homogeneous group. If it were not for the fact that the individuals in this group are living in the same city and working at the same job, they would not likely be grouped together. A Pole and a Portugese may not have much more than that in common, except of course, religious, moral and family values that are much the same across Europe. Their communality comes from their experiences in this country as well as those factors common to Europe. They tend to see less discrimination and judge it less harshly. One interpretation of this is that they may be more racist, but that is not necessarily a fair way to interpret the results. Europe is a small place by comparison to Canada and in Europe people from different cultures and countries can come into frequent contact. This experience may produce a tolerance for others or it may produce a tolerance for the tensions that always exist between culturally different groups. As a group the Europeans are older than the other cab drivers. The horrors of Europe during the war and the post-war hardships are probably the reasons these individuals came to Canada. By comparison to the situations they left, the situations they experience in cab driving may not seem harsh. Many have strong kin and religious affiliations and come from a tradition "helping our own". They may feel that what they do to help their own is to "discriminate" in favour of themselves rather than against others.

Natives are unique among the categories, they were here first. Some of the individuals in this group learned a native language as their first tongue, others learned English. Most are admixtures of Native and European ancestry. It is likely that they grew up "in" this culture but not "of" this culture. Their lot as drivers is as hard and probably worse than most. They display a remarkable tolerance of discrimination, if not an actual insensitivity to it. They report few difficulties with fellow workers or passengers and a relatively high level of satisfaction with their jobs. When Native cab drivers are thought of as part of a broader Native grouping rather than as a sub-grouping of cab drivers several possible explanations for these differences become apparent. It may be that they have

been forced to tolerate discrimination by the dominant white culture for their entire lives and have experienced nothing else. It may be that, as a culture, they value co-operation over competition more than others. Compared to the difficulties many Natives have in making their way in "white" culture, if that is what they choose to do, these individuals are doing well. They are working while many are not, and the job of cab driving compares well to many of the occupations open to them. Perhaps if Natives were not so consistently disadvantaged in their dealings with the broader society, cab driving would not seem as attractive as they find it.

"Other Visible minorities" includes a wide variety of ethnic origins. As expected, the responses cited in this category were not always consistent, but there were some common threads. On the whole these individuals were more likely to be tolerant of troubling situations and more likely to explain those situations in personal terms. The composition of this group may provide an explanation. Some are from countries that have not had traditions of British or European style government and religion. Our society is relatively adept at providing its citizens with the conceptual apparatus to attach blame to others when things are not as we would wish them. Those from oriental cultures and religious backgrounds may be more likely to look inward, or to their kin, in times of stress. Many in the group are probably refugees from recent wars, such as those from the Lebanon and Vietnam. For them the relative stability of our society might be sufficiently attractive to allow them to take its shortcomings less seriously. More than that, they are likely to come from cultures that have little in common with Canada's culture and, therefore, there is little to which they can relate and attach meaning. They are more likely to have arrived recently in Canada compared to the other immigrants. For most of them there were not well established communities from their homelands for them to join. Above all, this is the group that has trouble communicating in English. Many situations must leave them bemused and in legitimate doubt that they understood or were understood in a language that can deliver insults with great subtlety. That may be the most useful explanation of why this category was less definite in its opinions.

Asian Indians are the closest any of these categories comes to a culturally homogeneous group. As a visible minority they are also likely the most highly visible, darkest, tallest and most distinctively dressed. As a homogeneous group, they are more likely to arrive at consistent interpretations of their experiences that are shared by all members of the group. Without doubt they often experience racism. They are also more likely to explain a problem as being caused by racism. Drivers from all backgrounds agree that it is Asian Indians who are discriminated against most. Why this should be is a topic beyond this brief study. What this study did reveal is that as a group Asian Indians are very hard working with strong motivation to improve their situation. The taxi industry is free enterprise reduced to basic principles. It is often an equal opportunity exploiter. The concentrated initiative to get ahead found among the Asian Indians can cause friction and perceptions of status may also play a part. Many of the individuals in this group have better than average education and left jobs of higher status to come to Canada. For some of them, driving a cab must be disheartening. The two points that emerged clearly from the study are that Asian Indians are more discriminated against than others, and they see more discrimination around them. These points are related, but are not necessarily the same thing. The first concerns how the broader society reacts to the Asian Indians and the second concerns how the Asian Indians react to the broader society. All that remains to be said at this point is that for a society such as ours that abhors discrimination on the grounds of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex, the present situation is far from satisfactory.

CLOSING REMARKS

There is racism in Canada and in Edmonton, and it forms part of the working life of cab drivers. The racism is rarely overt. It is just there as part of the "background" noise of everyday existence. It may not even be seen a major source of difficulties in comparison to the other situations faced by visible minority cab drivers. The concerns of making a living and of personal safety may be far

more troubling. What is perhaps most disturbing about the findings of this study is the extent to which discrimination may be the result of untested assumptions about what others think. A driver does not apply for work because he thinks he will not be hired. A company does not hire because it thinks a customer will not buy. A customer, without attaching very much significance to it, picks a cab with a driver the same colour as he or she is. Nor, do these things have to happen frequently. Memory of them lingers.

It would be inappropriate to consider the discrimination found in association with the taxi industry as unique or isolated. It is more likely a special case of the broader problems facing minority and immigrant groups within society as a whole. It has long been noted that identifiable groups sometimes gravitate toward particular occupations and that a consideration of history and the economy shows why this would be so. Some of these groups, such as those working in the garment or janitorial sectors are relatively invisible. What makes the situation of cab drivers different is that they are highly visible on our streets and come into hourly contact with a broad spectrum of the population. In these circumstances members of immigrant and minority groups will encounter the worst our community has to offer as well as experiencing those aspects of our society which made Canada, for many of us, the country of choice.